DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 267 520 EA 018 356

TITLE	Education--Society; Curricular Theory.
INSTITUTION	National Swedish Board of Education, Stockholm.
PUB DATE	86
NOTE	18p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
JOURNAL CIT	School Research Newsletter; n1 1986
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Data Analysis; *Decentralization; Diffusion (Communication); Elementary Secondary Education; *Foreign Countries; Governance; Meta Analysis; Program Implementation; *Research Design; Research Methodology; *Research Projects; Research Utilization; *School Based Management; *School Community Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	*Sweden

ABSTRACT

This ongoing project, conducted in four municipalities in Sweden, is investigating the ways in which schools and teaching are affected by various local communities and the ways in which central directives are transformed into a local educational reality. A diverse range of data have been collected, including demographic data from the municipalities, data on education authorities and school boards, intensive studies of work in individual schools, data on student achievement, and data on opinions of school personnel and students. These variegated data are derived from specific case studies which are simultaneously being treated thematically, so that analyses are proceeding on the basis of interaction between general data analyses and specific analyses of specific phenomena and processes. The idea is to build a "network" of analyses which, at the final stage, can be summarized and given an intelligible framework for assessing stability and change in compulsory schools. A brief summary illustration is provided of one facet of this inquiry that addresses the issue of political control. References are included. (TE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

SWEDISH NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL RESEARCH Newsletter

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

K. Jansson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED267520

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1986

FIELD - TOPIC
Curricular theory
Didactics

1986:1

Concluded project

TITLE OF PROJECT: EDUCATION - SOCIETY; CURRICULAR THEORY

In this project, the work of compulsory schools in poor municipalities has been followed since 1981. During this period the new Compulsory School Curriculum (Lgr 80) came into force, which made it possible to observe in practical terms the translation of a reform from central intentions to local reality.

The purpose of the project is, on the basis of a broad empirical study, to develop a conceptual apparatus - a theory - with the aid of which it will be possible to arrive at a better understanding of changes and stability in basic schools.

The purpose of the project is to study:

- The way in which schools and teaching are affected by the local community.
- The way in which central directives are transformed into a local educational reality.

Project conducted at: The Stockholm Institute of Education
Department of Educational Research
Box 34103
S-100 26 STOCKHOLM
Tel. 08-22 16 80

Scientific leader: Ulf P. Lundgren

Project assistants: Marie-Anne Colliander
Margareta Eklöv
Lars-Olov Jiveskog
Sten Pettersson

Project No.: 2289

EA 018 356

Published by Swedish National Board of Education, Department for Coordination and Planning, Information and Documentation Section, S-106 42 Sweden. Telephone: + 46 8 783 20 00
Responsible Editor: Inger Marklund. Editor: Marianne Carlsson
ISSN 0345-5343

NEWSLETTER 1981 - 1986

1981:1 Integration of the profoundly deaf and severely hearing impaired in ordinary classes
1981:2 The PANG Project. Process Analysis on Non-Grading
1981:3 Preconditions of change in schools (FISK)
1981:4 Social segregation in comprehensive schools in Sweden
1981:5 H.G. Macintosh. Report on a visit to Sweden
1981:6 Learning problems of junior level children - a Nordic joint research project
1981:7 Needs-oriented language learning for adults (BISVUX)
1981:8 List of Project 1981/82
1981:9 Teaching processes - world conception and Educational Vocational Guidance (SIA-SYO)
1981:10 Swedish science subjects in an international perspective: curriculum, teachers and pupils (SNILLE)

1982:1 Basic skills in a longterm perspective (BAS)
1982:2 Sign language and the learning of Swedish by deaf children (Project TSD)
1982:3 Preparedness for the future as an educational objective in upper secondary school
1982:4 Maturity levels and selfperception (MOS)
1982:5 Pupils' thinking and course requirements in science teaching (EKNA)
1982:6 Children in Group Day Care and Family care. A longitudinal study of children with different child care experiences

1983:1 Evaluation of Courses of Study at Upper Secondary School (UTGY)
1983:2 The Research Programme of The National Swedish Board of Education
1983:3 Science Subjects - An Evaluation of Student Achievement and Attitudes in International Perspective (IEA Science II)
1983:4 Evaluation through follow-up of students (UGU)
1983:5 Analysis of teacher-directed experimentation

1984:1 Children with early perceptual functional disturbances. A follow-up during school years
1984:2 The SIAu Project: Project description
1984:3 Transition from compulsory and upper secondary school to further education or employment - the GUARANTEE project
1984:4 Vertical integration at junior and intermediate levels
1984:5 Learning to read
1984:6 Family support and development - a longitudinal, ecological study of families with children of pre-school and junior-level age (the FAST-Project)
1984:7 Study assistance and adult study assistance - utilisation and effects
1984:8 UTRES - Evaluation of resource utilisation in upper secondary schools
1984:9 MEDIA PANEL

1985:1 Creativity and communication: music and art education - The KROK-projekt
1985:2 Children's participation at junior level
1985:3 Programme for recurrent educational situation reports: school description models
1985:4 Discovery learning and cognitive development - the UKU-projekt
1985:5 Man in a changing society - MIS
1985:6 Systematic evaluation of the "forests in schools" project (SIS)
1985:7 Evaluation of experimental concentration of studies in upper secondary school
1985:8 Pupils' working environment at school in use (EMILIA)
1985:9 Immigrants pupils at the senior level of compulsory school and in upper secondary school

1986:1 Education - Society; Curricular theory

Purpose and background

The implementation of a new Compulsory School Curriculum (Lgr 80) began on 1st July 1980. This greatly differs in a number of important respects from the two previous curricula (Lgr 62 and Lgr 69). One important difference concerns the structure of the curriculum and its function as a steering instrument. In Lgr 80, each school is expected to draw up a local working plan of its own, in accordance with the curricular guidelines. In previous curricula, school work was expected to be directly governed by the curriculum. Another important difference compared with previous curricula is that the new curriculum is adapted to the guidelines of school development laid down in the SIA reform.

The recommendations made by the SIA Commission implied a form of decentralisation or deconcentration of compulsory schooling. Schools were to be brought closer to the local community, their responsibilities were to be enlarged through the affiliation of municipal leisure activities (free activities) and they were to be given greater liberty in the deployment of resources. This meant a transformation of the tasks of the school system. Problem analyses were needed to provide documentation on the way in which resources should be apportioned, and evaluations were needed to check the way in which resources had been used. The SIA reform also heralded changes in the central steering strategy for the school system. In vital respects, the previous system of management by instruction began to be superseded by management by objectives. (Management by instruction means that school activities are governed by rules, one concrete example in this respect being the utilisation of resources. Management by objectives means that schools are governed through the definition of goals, without any prior specification of the means whereby those goals are to be achieved. In concrete terms this means, for example, that resources can be deployed locally with a view to optimum goal achievement.)

The recommendations of the SIA Commission came during a period of economic growth. By the time they came to be implemented, the economic situation had changed. Many municipalities do not have the economic

resources to implement the reform completely. Consequently its overall impact became concerned not so much with the integrated school day as with local school management.

Lgr 80 has to be considered against this - admittedly simplified - background. The new curriculum proceeded further along the main lines established by the SIA Commission. Lgr 80 represented a new curricular structure. The central curriculum clearly states the goals of school but leaves scope for local adjustment in the achievement of these goals. Every school is required to draw up a local working plan, based on its interpretation of the curriculum and with reference to available resources. This plan is to be successively followed and evaluated and new priorities defined on the basis of the evaluations.

Work organisation itself was transformed by making the basic planning unit a work unit which can be constructed round grades or subject fields. The reform strengthened the educational responsibilities and leadership of school management. It also strengthened the responsibility of municipal education authorities for local school development, which is to be assisted by local development work. These principal changes call for a new competence at local level. The curricular reform was followed up in a reform of in-service training, whereby INSET was restructured and made a local concern.

These, in brief, were some of the salient features of Lgr 80 following on from the SIA reform. Both reforms are based on a number of underlying principles, a species of code. One principle has been to deconcentrate decision-making in the school system by locating fields of responsibility close to the local school unit. Another has to be to decentralise, i.e. to give local political agencies more influence within the school system. A third principle, and a consequence of the first two, is that of increased local responsibility for change and follow-up in the school sector.

The basic changes undergone by the educational system in the past decade present a number of exciting research assignments. One essential question concerns the conditions attaching to these changes. Has

decentralisation led to an increase of local influence in schools? Is decentralisation an effect of educational problems no longer being soluble at central level, due to diminishing resources? Which groups will avail themselves of the new influence available locally? What effect are the reforms having at classroom level? Do they mean any change in teaching conditions, and if so which pupil categories will benefit from the new reforming strategy? These questions are more than just interesting research topics. To no less an extent, they are matters to be taken into account in evaluations of different forms of experimentation, and the answers have an important bearing above all on the implementation of the reforms and on a better understanding of what can be achieved through educational reforms. To these questions we may add the observation that there is relatively little knowledge on which to base any answers to them. No in-depth studies have been made in Sweden of the effects of reforming strategies, i.e. in-depth in the sense of trying to explain the effects in the actual, everyday educational context - at practical level. Putting it drastically, but not untruthfully, the explanations given for the occurrence or non-occurrence of change have been in the nature of "amateur psychology", in that they have been based, more often than not, on assumptions about people's intentions. One frequently proferred explanation, for example, is that "teachers are conservative and as such opposed to reforms".

A research project on questions of this kind was launched in 1982 and, between 1981 and 1986, was funded out of the NBE's research and development allocation. This project is being conducted by the Research Group for Curricular Theory and Cultural Reproduction of the Department of Educational Research, Stockholm Institute of Education, and its emphasis is to be considered part of the total research conducted by the group. This project is also geared to a number of other projects concerning educational change and stability and the role of education in cultural reproduction.

Method and data

The research group has undertaken two other research projects, partly parallel to the present project and partly in anticipation of it. One of these projects, headed by Gerhard Arfwedson, Ph.D., and Lars Lundman, Ph.D., focused on school as a workplace. Above all they attempted to study the way in which the school code, i.e. the specific conditions and principles governing the work of a school, could be explained in terms to the structure of the local community. In the second project a study was made of the school working environment with reference to teaching conditions and the working conditions of school management. The data collected during these projects have to some extent also been utilised in the research project now under consideration, in the sense that data for this project were collected with reference to data collected previously, so that the latter could be supplemented and updated.

Four municipalities have been selected. In three of them, systematic data have been collected for four years. The fourth served as a "reference municipality", and the method of data collection used there could be termed "anthropological". The three "main municipalities" were selected in such a way that their socio-economic structure bore a fairly close resemblance to that of Sweden as a whole (medium city). One of these municipalities represents a manufacturing community, while the other is a sparsely populated rural community.

The data collected vary in nature and scope. The following description is to be taken as a collection of examples:

- Data were collected on the demographic structure of the municipalities, e.g. employment, occupational fields and living standards.
- Data about and surrounding education authorities and the work of school boards. Minutes of school board proceedings, resource allocation, contacts with schools, interviews with school board members etc.

- Data on work in the individual schools. Specific intensive studies were made here, e.g. studies of special teaching and an intensive study of work in one school.
- Data on pupils' achievements, including continuous achievement tests.
- Data on the opinions of teachers, school management, other staff and pupils on school work etc.

These data are extremely voluminous and variegated, including minutes of proceedings, questionnaires, observations, interviews, tests etc. During the period in which the project was funded by the National Board of Education, work was mainly concentrated on the collection of data. Data were processed on a parallel basis, but most of the processing will take place after the funding authority has registered the project as concluded. The reason for this strategy is the comprehensive data needed. The NBE has made funds available which have been applied primarily to the extensive collection of data. As a result, this project and the two previous projects also mentioned have led to the build-up of a substantial data bank which will provide the foundation for a host of analyses of current changes in compulsory schooling.

Being so variegated, the data cannot be processed by any kind of uniform effort. The analyses and processing now undertaken are methodologically related to the various problems. Data have, however, been collected in a single perspective, and this influences the methods whereby they can be analysed. The study is not an evaluation of the reforms entailed by the SIA school and Lgr 80, in the sense of our having attempted to study how these reforms took shape. Instead we have adopted the approach of study in compulsory school "from below", i.e. studying the way in which it works at local level. This was done in a period when the SIA school had found its level and a new curriculum had been introduced, but these reforms were all the time considered from the vantage point of school practices. We are concerned with finding out, not what happened to the reforms but how schools as a whole were affected by the reforms. In other words, our main points of inquiry are:

- How are schools and teaching affected by the local community?
- How are central directives translated into local educational reality?

These two main topics of inquiry have been treated in two distinct ways. Firstly, they have been treated and are being treated thematically. This means looking for certain general answers to our questions. General in the sense of relating to certain central concepts, e.g. decentralisation and deconcentration, data being handled with reference to those themes. (By deconcentration we mean the relocation of decision-making powers and responsibilities further down in the bureaucratic hierarchy, from central to local officials. By decentralisation we mean the transfer of political power from central political agencies to local ones.) Thus the answers obtained to the main questions refer to certain general aspects, viz how schools are organised in terms of decentralisation - to take one example - or how central directives on decentralisation are transformed by school boards and come to affect teaching. Secondly, they have been treated, and are being treated, with reference to specific analyses of specific phenomena. This latter implies a kind of field study methodology in which individual schools or specific aspects of their work are studied. For example, studies can be made of a school where there have been extensive experiments in self-administration, or of specific arrangements for special instruction, and so on.

Through this method - in the broad sense - analyses are all the time proceeding on a basis of interaction between general data analyses and specific analyses of specific phenomena and processes. In this way the case studies provide concrete documentation for the thematic analyses. The idea is to build up a "network" of analyses which, at the final stage, can be summarised and given an intelligible framework with the aid of which certain vital aspects of stability and change in compulsory schools can be understood and explained. Of course, we are not aiming for an unambiguous description of stability and change in such a many-sided process, but we do aim, starting with empirical studies, to build up a conceptual apparatus which will make possible the partial

achievement of such a knowledge of stability and change and on the basis of which we will be able to deepen and broaden that knowledge.

Ongoing analyses

As has now been made clear, the research project has had a theoretical aim. Consequently, its results cannot be summarised in simple terms and, above all, they cannot be summarised briefly. In order to explain the analytical approach, explanations are needed of the concepts employed. Space will not allow us to describe and define the structure and results of the analyses, and so we have chosen to present various findings from one of the analyses now in progress concerning political control of compulsory school. This brief account is to be taken as one example.

Space will only permit a brief illustration. At the end of the summary is a list of reports from the project and reports from the two previous projects also mentioned. The latter is confined to reports which have a direct bearing on the present research project, in the sense of analysing data used in the project or including analyses which will be added to the two fundamental points of inquiry we have specified for this project.

Political control

Another way of describing the points of inquiry indicated above is by saying that the project is aimed at finding out how a reform comes into being, is decided on and put into effect. Here we have declared the intention of adopting a "worm's eye approach". In other words, our analyses can be said to emanate from what might be termed the realisation arena, i.e. the place where decisions on change are realised, implemented. The data collected are concerned, among other things, with the way in which school activities in a number of municipalities are changed by a reform. Starting with this description and our analyses, we can proceed to inquire as to the causes of the documented changes. In numerous and vital respects we find that documented changes can hardly be termed intended effects.

Date can, in a stylised fashion, be said to present the following pattern:

Measure A is decided on. The decision is followed by a directive and information on its implementation. At local level the decision is converted into decision B, which is implemented. Decision B or measure B is often already latent in the school's activities and solves a series of pre-existing problems. Measure or decision B is not the same as decision or measure A, but A makes B possible. As a result of B being implemented, decision A is seen in a positive light and the reform package of which A forms part comes to enjoy additional confidence. Decision A is accompanied by "a language" - nomenclature and new terminology. Decision or measure B is described in these terms. An evaluation of the implementation of A shows that this decision has been implemented. New decisions for change implicitly assume that measure A was effective.

This, of course, is a highly stylised pattern, but it makes a point of departure for a series of data experiments. We find that this pattern can account for a number of measures. Other measures cannot be accounted for in this way. If we nonetheless employ this initial pattern and locate the deviations when the pattern does not entirely fit certain measures, we find:

That the pattern applies if the decisions made centrally (A) are relatively imprecise. Whether or not measure A is transformed into measure B will depend on how exactly A has been framed and what information has been supplied about it. We might express this in theorem form:

> The more abstract or imprecise the terms in which the goal of a measure is expressed centrally, the greater is the likelihood of the goal and the measure being transformed at local level. On the other hand, the more exactly the goal is formulated, the less likely it is to be transformed, but again, the less likely it is to be interesting.

We find another reason for the conversion of A into B if measure A is based on a problem analysis which lacks relevance to the persons who are to put it into effect. Programmes, then, have to be formulated which, in addition to realising the central intentions, also genuinely provide resources for solving important local problems. If the goals defined centrally for a change are based on selective information from the practical field, then of course the measures which are implemented will vary according to the way in which the specific problems to be tackled are articulated and interpreted.

Thus far the idea of explaining data is simple and more or less logical. Empirical data supply us with a number of different examples of this very conversion of measures into new measures or of conversions of goals into new goals, termed goal substitutes. To explain these observed patterns we need to answer a series of questions:

- How do centrally framed goal documents and guidelines for practical measures come into being?

- What problem analyses exist concerning centrally framed goal documents and proposed measures?

- How are problems identified in local schools which acquire priority of interpretation?

- How are local problem analysis, central directives and the measures actually taken interlinked?

- How is information transmitted between decision-makers, administrators and school practitioners?

The interrelationship of these questions and the theoretical framework we are employing can perhaps best be understood by means of a graphic model.

FORMULATION ARENA
ACTORS:
Politicians
Interest organisations
Specialists
REFORMS:
Goals
Measures
INFORMATION:
Purposes
Rules
Control

I

I

INTERPRETATION; REFORMULATION

I

I

REALISATION ARENA
ACTORS:
Politicians
Interest organisations
Specialists
REFORMS:
Goals
Measures
INFORMATION:
Purposes
Rules
Control

The terms formulation arena and realisation arena are used to describe the arenas in which educational policy is framed and realised respectively.

It may be useful for A to become B instead of A. The essence of reforms can very well be to provide scope for local changes, as of course in the case of Lgr 80. At the same time there is something of a problem in the relationship between decisions and their realisation, viz the political limits to realisation. Not every B is necessarily desirable in terms of the fundamental value norms laid down for the education system.

In order to answer these questions we have tried to develop the conceptual apparatus. We need to be able to segregate the various components and levels within the system. We must have concepts enabling us to find out where power is located and where control is exerted. And we must obtain a language which will enable us to uncover the terms in which data are concealed. In Political control and educational reforms and Organising schools; the direction and organisation of compulsory schooling, both of which are included in the list of references, a conceptual apparatus of this kind is presented and an attempt is made to answer the above questions.

This example has served to show how the different parts of this presentation are to be understood, i.e. the presentation of the purpose of the project, the data collected and the type of analysis. Thus they have had a kind of didactic value. Ultimately we hope that the presentation will in this way encourage people to read the reports, articles and books which have been published and are to be published in future.

Timetable

As has already been made clear, the project can be described, chronologically and formally, in two ways. It can be described in terms of research administration, i.e. with reference to the period for which the funding authority has awarded financial support. In this respect the project has been concluded. On the other hand, it can be described as part of a more long-range research project included in the interest sphere and ambitions of a research group. In these terms the project can be said to have completed the first of two phases. Data have been

collected and to a great extent processed. Analyses have been drafted and tested, as have various case studies. The works included in the list of references are reports from this phase. A second phase is in progress, in which data are being analysed and added to other research, at the same time as various working materials are being synthesised. This work also involves international also involves international co-operation. The effects of decentralisation are being analysed in association with researchers at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and elsewhere. Some of the data collected are being used by the working party set up by the Ministry of Education to investigate mathematics teaching and knowledge of mathematics in compulsory schools.

This second phase is part of an ongoing research activity on the subject of stability and change which cannot simply be termed concluded at a certain point in time. It is to be hoped that the data bank which has been constructed will remain serviceable for many years, not least for purposes of comparison. It also provides a basis for intended follow-ups, and this should facilitate longitudinal studies. Studies of this kind are, in the long run, a necessary means of cognitive production with a view to better understanding changes in basic school, in its objectives and content, and in its function within the community.

References

Arfwedson, G. & Lundman, L.: Skolpersonal och skolkoder. Om arbets platser i förändring. (School staff and school codes. Workplaces in transition.) Stockholm, Liber. Läromedel. 1984.
(In Swedish)

Arfwedson, G.: School Codes and Teachers' Work. Lund: CWK/Gleerup/ Liber. 1985

Bernstein, B. & Lundgren, U.P.: Makt, kontroll och pedagogik. Studier av den kulturella reproduktionen. (Power, control and pedagogics. Studies of cultural reproduction.) Lund, Liber. 1983.
(In Swedish)

Carlgren, I.: Lokalt utvecklingsarbete. (Local development work.) Karlstad, Pedagogiska institutionen, Högskolan i Karlstad. 1986.
(In Swedish)

Colliander, M-A, Hasselberg, K., Jiveskog, L-O & Pettersson, S.: Självförvaltning i åldersintegrerad låg- och mellanstadieskola. En utvärdering efter ett års verksamhet. (Self-administration in vertically integrated junior level and intermediate level schools. Evaluation of one year's activities.) Stockholm, Pedagogiska institutionen, Högskolan för lärarutbildningen. 1985. (Stencil)
(In Swedish)

Colliander, M-A, Jiveskog, L-O & Pettersson, S.: Självförvaltning i åldersintegrerad låg- och mellanstadieskola. En utvärdering efter tre års verksamhet. (Self-administration in vertically integrated junior level and intermediate level schools. Evaluation of three year's activities.) Stockholm, Pedagogiska institutionen, Högskolan för lärarutbildninge. 1986. (Stencil)
(In Swedish)

Lindensjö, B. & Lundgren, U.P.: Politisk styrning och utbildnings reformer. (Political control and education reforms.) Stockholm, Liber. Läromedel, 1986.
(In Swedish)

Lundgren, U.P.: "Between schooling and Education: Notes on Curriculum Change Within the Second Generation of School Reforms in Sweden." Invited address to the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York, March, 1982. Educational Resources Information Center, ED 218 193. Washington. 1982.

Lundgren, U.P.: Att organisera skolan. Om grundskolans organisation och ledning. (Organising schools. The organisation and direction of compulsory schools.) Stockholm, Liber. Läromedel. 1986.
(In Swedish)

Lundgren, U.P., Naeslund, L. / Stålhammar, B.: Lärares och skolledares arbetsvillkor. En sammanfattning av ett forskningsprojekt. (The working conditions of teachers and school management. Summary of a research project.) Stockholm, Liber. Läromedel. 1986.
(In Swedish)

Ringh, H., Westlund, V. & Åström, B.: Läroplansimplementation i teori, strategi och lokal genomföranderesurs. (Curricula implementation in theory, strategy and local implementation resources.) Stockholm, Pedagogiska institution, Högskolan för lärarutbildning. 1984.
(In Swedish)

Stålhammar, B.: Rektorsfunktionen i grundskolan. Vision - verklighet. (The role of the head teacher in compulsory school. Vision and reality.) Uppsala, Uppsala Studies in Education No. 22. Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell. 1982.
(In Swedish)

SCHOOL RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

School Research Newsletter contains reviews of current and terminated research within the field of education.

School Research Newsletter is published and distributed in an edition of 450 issues ten times per year. The Newsletter is obtained free of charge.

SKOLÖVERSTYRELSEN
National Board of Education
Information and Documentation Section
S-106 42 Stockholm
Sweden

Telephone: + 46 .8 783 20 00